

Lake Lanao may be gone in 20 years

■ The Lanao Community and tourists alike should do their part now on taking care of the Lanao Lake if they still want to savor its breathtaking view. The Lanao lake is one of the five oldest lakes in the world and is the second-largest freshwater lake in the Philippines.



MARANAO mythology has a wondrous story about the creation of Lake Lanao.

In the beginning, the land of Mantapoli was so heavy, it threatened to turn the world upside down. Allah instructed the Angel Gabriel to call all His angels. Millions of angels lifted Mantapoli and transferred it to the center of the earth. Allah then filled the enormous gap with water, thus creating the deep-blue Lanao Lake.

Unfortunately, Lanao Lake no longer bears a resemblance the lake created by God. Decades of logging, pollution and degradation have turned it into a vast sewage pool.

Local doomsayers are warning that Mindanao's largest lake may be gone in about 20 years or so if it is not saved from internal and external threats.

Lake Lanao in Lanao del Sur is one of the five oldest lakes in the world and is the second-largest freshwater lake in the Philippines, with a surface area of 340

square kilometers.

The United Nations Environment Program considered Lake Lanao as one of the 250 priority biodiverse lakes. It used to be home to 18 endemic fish species that not found anywhere else. These species are now gone.

Lake Lanao sits atop a plateau in the heart of Lanao del Sur, surrounded by 31 municipalities and one city (Marawi). Four rivers feed into the lake, and its only outlet is the Agus River, which flows northward into Iligan Bay via two channels, one over the famous Maria Cristina Falls, the other over the Linamon Falls. The Agus River provides electricity for the Mindanao power grid.

Lanao del Sur, the second-most populated province in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), is also the seventh-most impoverished (as of 2003) and has the sixth-lowest human development index (HDI) among prov-

inces in the country.

About 92 percent of those who lived around the lake are Maranaos, who are historically and culturally linked to the lake and dependent on it for food and livelihood.

Most of the employed (at only 50.98 percent of the total workforce or only 28 percent of the total population) are in agriculture, hunting and forestry. This highlights the dependence on the natural resources— especially by the women—particularly in the watershed areas in the livelihood of the people.

Impact on the lake watershed reservation

Presidential Proclamation 871 dated February 1992 declared the Lake Lanao Watershed reservation. The area spans 180,640 hectares.

Lake Lanao serves a reservoir for National Power Corp.'s (Napocor's) six Agus Grid hydroelectric power plants, which generate an aggregate installed capacity of 727.1

► **LakeD2**

PRESERVE, PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT—'KHUTBA'

(Editor's note: Following are excerpts from the khutba or sermon delivered by the ulama affiliated with the Assembly of the Darul Ifta of the Philippines.)

Respected brothers and sisters in Islam! Islam is a very practical worldview. It seeks, in all of its principles and injunctions, to give pragmatic shapes to its concepts and values. Indeed, the notion of *Tauhid* (oneness of Allah) and *Khalifa* (vicegerency) has been translated into practical injunctions in the sharia (Islamic Law).

Such sharia institutions as *Haram* zones, inviolate areas within which development is prohibited to protect natural resources and *ni'ma*, reserves established solely for the conservation of wildlife, marine resources and forest from the core of environmental legislation of Islam

Allah stated in the Holy Koran: "Verily! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and the ships which sail through the sea with that which is of use to mankind, and the water [rain] which Allah sends down from the sky and makes the earth alive therewith after its death, and the moving [living] creatures of all kinds that He has scattered therein, and in the veering of winds and clouds which are held between the sky and the earth, are indeed Ayat [proofs, evidences, signs, etc.] for people of understanding." (2:164)

These verses tell us how important we are in this world as the *Khalifa* (vicegerent) of Allah created by Him. Such is the main purpose and objective of life. Nonetheless, we are to worship Him alone and none else. This way, *ibada* (worship) is most important to us. We must understand that *ibada* is not only expressed or done with *salah* (daily prayers), or fasting on Ramadhan, or to perform *hajj* once in a lifetime. *Ibada* in its real sense is obedience to the Commandments and Divine Teachings of Allah in the Holy Book (Koran) and as well obey the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad, and be thankful to the Creator for whatever good and happiness we attain or achieve in this World in preparation for the Eternal Life in the hereafter.

Lately, some of our provinces, like Tawi-Tawi and Sulu, were inevitably dragged by news about reported encroachment of for-

eign vessels that catch at sea anchorage rare, costly fish specie found only in the portion of the Sulu Sea off Tawi-Tawi.

The *mufti* has declared a need for the preservation of the sea turtle in the province's sea, it being of endangered specie also.

But what can an edict or opinion of religious leaders do to help regulate the exploitation of our natural resources, and worse yet, by outsiders doing it without the permission of our people.

First, there should be a written regulation issued by the governing authorities for everybody's compliance.

Few of us may have learned that few men among us braved to intercept another vessel from Navotas in Metro Manila. The owner of the vessel called the authorities in Zamboanga City and declared that his boat was stolen and its crew held hostage in Tawi-Tawi. What an irony to bear. If we police outsiders against the exploitation of our natural resources, it is us in the end that appears being the thieves.

It is also alarming to find out that some enterprising individuals were ferrying some of our women and sisters to anchored fishing vessels to entertain their crew with what appears to be prostitution of some seawdwelling women.

On love and protection of the environment without the slightest intent of greed on and abuse of the creations, the Prophet of Islam said: "Love whatever on the Earth and He who is above will love you."

In the *hadith*, I mentioned, the Holy Prophet informs that love and care are not confined on personal relations among human beings, but are extended onto other creations, the botanical garden and animal life on land and bodies of water.

In this regard, man should not cause destruction and spread mischief in any form upon the Earth and its waters because Allah the Almighty said: "And do not do mischief on the earth, after it has been set in order, and invoke Him with fear and hope. Surely, Allah's Mercy is [ever] near unto the good doers." (7:56; 7:85)

The Holy Prophet said: "Do not create harm so you will not be harmed."

In his pre-deployment orientation to the Muslim army of his time, he would forbid

► **KhutbaD2**

■ No one needs the Manila Bay sunset when one has Liguasan Marsh dusk to look at.



Liguasan Marsh an 'Amazon' in Mindanao

BY SAMIRA GUTOC
MORO TIMES MANAGING EDITOR

WHAT do the Philippine Eagle, a crocodile and some 112,000 Maguindanaon families have in common?

They all call Liguasan Marsh in Central Mindanao "home."

The biggest wetland in Mindanao and one of the largest freshwater bodies in the country, Liguasan Marsh spans 288,000 hectares.

It is situated at the North Cotabato and South Cotabato provinces and lies at the confluence of the Pulangi, Maganoy, Buluan and Allah rivers, where water from the Cotabato River Basin is drained, preventing flood in downstream areas of the Central Mindanao region. Liguasan Marsh cuts across three provinces—Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat and Cotabato.

Most of the natural resources here remain untapped, thus the interest of many inter-

national-funding agencies. Liguasan is more famous for hosting the Bulio sanctuary, a former stronghold of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), where founding Chairman Salamat Hashim held camp. The peace and order has affected the blossoming of the eco-tourism potential of the place.

The biodiversity is rich. According to the Philippine environmental group Haribon, the marsh supports a great variety of aquatic

► **AmazonD2**

■ LAKE FROM D1

Lake Lanao may be gone in 20 years—experts say

megawatts. Lake Lanao is an integral part of the powerful river system that produces about 70 percent of Mindanao's electricity.

To fully tap the enormous hydroelectric potential of Lake Lanao, the flow of Agus River must be stabilized at the expense of destabilizing the level of the Lake Lanao. Destabilizing the lake level according to foreign writers Frey and Rabor has severe economic and sociological repercussions on the region as well as marked influences on the limnology of the lake. It should be noted that the construction of the series of dams across the Agus River will lower the lake's level to as much as 9 meters.

The degradation of Lake Lanao is also caused by siltation from deforestation, pollution from agricultural run-offs and human habitation, fluctuation of water levels due to the dams, overfishing, introduction of alien species, and forest denudation. This is causing major social and economic backlash not only on the local population but also on the lake itself and the entire country.

According to the Save Lake Lanao Movement (SALAM), the lake watershed is gradually sloping from sea level at the outlet of Agus River at Iligan Bay to about 702 meters elevation at the lake level to about 2,316 meters at the peak of the highest point along the watershed divide at Mount Magaturing.

The 54-nation Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has taken note of the plight of Lake Lanao through the representations of a



■ Green fields that surround Lake Lanao makes it one of the closest things to paradise.

group, the Ranao Claims Against the Power Plants (RCAPP). The group complains that Napocor, a government corporation, has not complied with the terms of an Environmental Compliance Certificate issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources requiring the company to build and construct irrigation infrastructures in the lake area, organize an environment guarantee fund and provide compensation to farmers in inundated areas, and monitor water-borne diseases in the lake's waters.

The group demanded that

Napocor undertake massive reforestation in watershed areas.

Napocor, in response, said it has embarked in major reforestation and agro-forestry and fish stocking in the watershed, contributing some P10 million to the Lake Lanao Watershed Protection Council of the Environment and Natural Resources department. It has also involved Save Lake Lanao Movement as part of a Multi-partite Monitoring Team to oversee the implementation of community programs to rehabilitate the lake.

Several agencies and groups have taken up the cudgel for the lake.

The government's Watershed Council, Napocor, provincial governments of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, and civil society groups—Ranao Claims Against the Power Plants, Save Lake Lanao Movement, and Philippine Muslim Women Council—have each worked on environmental initiatives that will hopefully benefit the generations of Maranaos to come.

Protected and rehabilitated, Lake Lanao may still become the deep-blue lake God created for the Maranaos.

SAMIRA GUTOC AND DALUMABI BULA

■ AMAZON FROM D1

Liguasan Marsh an 'Amazon' in Mindanao

wildlife, including 20 species of fish, three species of reptiles, and more than 20 species of waterfowl, notably herons, egrets and ducks.

Former Dean of the College of Forestry of the Cotabato City State Polytechnic College Abonawas Pandaliday said there are 92 recorded bird species, six reptiles and five amphibians here. Here one can find the rare Comb-crested Jacana (*Irediparra gallinacea*), the endangered Philippine Crocodile (*Crocodylus mindorensis*), and the Estuarine Crocodile (*C. porosus*), as well as the rare Philippine Eagle, (formerly known as the Monkey-eating Eagle, known by its scientific name, *Pithecophaga jefferyi*.)

Datu Muslimin Ampatuan, undersecretary for operations of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), said their office has classified Liguasan Marsh as a natural biotic area. In 1941, the Bureau of Forestry declared 43,971 hectares of the vast marshland as game refuge and bird sanctuary.

The marsh is home to 112,000 Maguindanaon families whose primary means of livelihood are fishing when water levels are high and agriculture when they are low. Agricultural land is rich and fertile for growing corn, rice, vegetables, legumes and root crops.



■ The Liguasan Marsh's freshwater gives life not only to water creatures, but to various plants such as corn and root crops as well.

Will human needs destroy the sanctuary?

Pandaliday said the original flora have been largely altered because of human encroachment and land conversion. Swamp forest sites sampled for agricultural purposes are no longer intact. Other threats to nature include deforestation caused by timber poaching, land conversion, and improper agricultural-land management practices.

Nongovernmental organizations with foreign aid and the government have recognized the economic and political importance of Liguasan Marsh.

In the Cotabato-Agusan River Basin Development Project, government has initiated the construction of a cut-off channel from the Pagulungan sector of the Rio

Grande de Mindanao to prevent and control floods. A major development project, the Liguasan Marsh Freshwater Fisheries Project, was established under the auspices of the Southern Philippine Development Authority, which plans the installation of at least 800 fish cages for tilapia culture and another 400 fish corrals for fish capture.

Admiral Muhammad Som of the international monitoring team, which is overlooking the ceasefire agreement between government and the MILF, said Liguasan Marsh contains great oil and mineral reserves "that have become the envy of many."

Dr. Abas Candao, chairman of the Bangsamoro Development Agency, said the "conservation of

the natural environment is a moral and ethical imperative, and that there is need for these ethical teachings to be backed with legislation and effective enforcement."

The Development Agency is the development arm of the MILF rebels, who are known to seek refuge at the forested portions of Liguasan Marsh.

Som said the first step in the implementation of reforestation program for Liguasan Marsh "is for everybody to change their mindset."

"Although it is not an easy move, we must realize that we will never reach nor achieve anything in our way to preserve nature unless we tune ourselves to be an environmental-friendly users or consumers," he said.

Roadmap to peace:
A new deal for Mindanao

(Editor's note: Professor Moner Bajunaid was chancellor of the Mindanao State University in General Santos. He is on the board of the Peace and Equity Foundation and is a convenor of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy. Following is his speech at the Mindanao State graduation ceremonies on March 30, 2008.)

BY PROF. MONER
M. BAJUNAIID



JIHADIST

Peace has been defined in many ways, at times in a way that implies the absence of war. The concept of peace, however, has a wider and deeper significance in the history of man.

Sayyid Qutb, a well-known Islamic scholar, once wrote, "Peace emerges as the preamble to the principle of harmony. Peace means harmony in the universe, harmony in the laws of life and the origin of man. War, on the other hand, is the result of the violations of harmony, such as injustice, oppression and subjugation."

Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, said, "Peace and freedom, these are the foundations of human existence. Without peace and freedom, nations cannot develop, and mankind cannot enjoy neither happiness nor tranquility. Peace for a single human being is impossible without peace for his or her nation. But peace without freedom is not peace."

I share the views of Sayyid Qutb and Konrad Adenauer. Peace, freedom and justice are intertwined and indivisible. The road to peace, however, is long and requires a process that can only be taken with wisdom and patience, and with an unwavering commitment to address the challenges of peacemaking. The roadmap to peace requires a process of dialogue, education, accommodation, and yes, love.

Dialogue

I had the rare opportunity of joining the peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) from 1997 to 2000 until the outbreak of Erap Estrada's all-out war. My experience in the peace process taught me the value of dialogue.

Understanding in the midst of diversity is the essence of dialogue, whether interfaith or intercivilizational. In Mindanao, that essence is sadly missing. What we see is a failure to communicate and to listen. We view others in our image, and never try to look others with their own eyes.

Listening is one of the 10 values adopted by the UNESCO in order to achieve international understanding. The late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia once said, "Man is created with two ears and one mouth in order for him to listen twice as much as he can talk."

Harmony and peaceful pro-existence should be the ultimate aim of dialogue. To reach this goal, there needs a process to be undertaken with commitment and mutual trust. This process should erase the seeds of hatred, antipathy, and prejudice. And in the end, it should open the way to understanding, reconciliation and cooperation. That is the hallmark of a dialogue.

Education

A verse in the Koran teaches mankind that God has created us from a male and a female, and made us evolve into nations and tribes so that we may know one another. Getting to know our fellow human being, regardless of creed, race and color, is the key to acquiring knowledge. Here, education plays a vital role in promoting peace and understanding.

Knowledge is imparted from generation to generation. Mankind has carried the torch of knowledge from one civilization to another. Knowledge was passed from the hands of men and women of wisdom, ignoring their

racial or religious affiliations. For knowledge has no borders; it transcends tradition and culture.

Accommodation

Accommodation means allowing others to fully develop their natural and innate potentials, while interacting with the rest of the society. The whole mankind is one humanity, sharing common experiences and common heritage. Let us not forget, we are a family of nations belonging to One God.

Muslims and Christians can join hands for the sake of our common humanity. If we build on our commonalities rather than differences, this world would be a better place to live in.

Love

When I was studying in a Catholic high school, we were told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. My devout Muslim parents taught me what Prophet Muhammad once said, "You are a Muslim when you wish for people what you wish for yourself."

So many things can be said about love of fellow human beings. Jesus came to teach the virtues of love. Muhammad preached the brotherhood of man among his followers. Both Islam and Christianity tell us to be merciful, kind and loving to our fellowmen.

The ultimate challenge of the 21st century will be to face the reality that humanity shares a common fate on a shared planet. We are part of an interconnected world of global trade, ever-growing migration, dynamic ideas, notwithstanding the risk of widespread diseases, global warming, wars and conflict.

In the words of Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University and author of *The End of Poverty*, "The idea that has the greatest potential to change the world is simply this: by overcoming cynicism, ending our misguided view of the world as an enduring struggle of 'us' vs. 'them' and instead seeking global solutions, we actually have the power to save the world for all, today and in the future. Whether we end up fighting one another or whether we work together to confront common threats—our fate, our common wealth, is in our hands."

Each of you, graduates of a new generation, has a role to play in our society and a chance for leadership. Study the problems in your community and, whenever possible, travel into the land of the poor and the distressed. To understand your generation's real challenges, there is no substitute for seeing the face of poverty and conflict, the wanton destruction of our forests and natural resources. To realize that we are all in this shared planet together, there is no substitute for meeting and engaging with people across cultures and religions. Get your community involved in some aspect of sustainable development: addressing the roots of poverty, conflict and environmental destruction.

Finally, let us offer a gift of hope to our new generation; a hope that our people, Muslims and Christians alike, can journey together into the path of peace and prosperity; a hope that they will live together a future not of fear and mistrust, but of goodwill and understanding; a future not of bigotry, but of respect and tolerance; a future not of conflict but of resolution; a future not of indifference, but of accommodation; a future not of hate, but of love and compassion.

■ KHUTBA FROM D1

PRESERVE, PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT—'KHUTBA'

them the harming of people that were non-party to the conflict, "the elderly, the children and women [among them], as well as the synagogues and places of worship [of other religions] and do not cut the trees."

We have to be aware of the fact that Islam prescribes the protection and preservation of Mother Nature and whatever is entrusted to us by

the Almighty. Islam also reminds us not to be wasteful on anything beneficial for humankind. We should not destroy whatever is on Earth and in seas, which are all created for the benefit of humankind.

Allah said in the Koran: "And give to the kindred his due and to the Miskin [poor] and to the wayfarer. But spend not wastefully [your wealth] in the manner

of a spendthrift. Verily, spendthrifts are brothers of the Shayatin [devils], and the Shayatin [Devil Satan] is ever ungrateful to his Lord." (17:26-27)

In the same manner, anything we need for the welfare of the people should be properly and carefully managed as mandated by Islam. This includes the slaughtering of animals, hunting of birds and

catching of fish. Any action without justification and valid reasons should be avoided and discouraged. Wrong interpretation and amendments of any teachings of Islam has to be ceased. Muslims should without any reservation worship Allah alone and obey His Eternal Guidance and follow the tradition of Prophet Mohammad.

May Allah direct me and you to the blessings of the Glorious Koran and benefit me and you in whatever is in it of the *Ayat* and *Wise Dhikr*. I say this and ask Allah the Great and the Most Honored for forgiveness for me, you and all Muslims for every sin. Invoke Him for forgiveness, for He is Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

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»feature

Non-Muslims flock to sumptuous Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI: Dozens of Westerners, including robe-clad women, have been flocking to Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, an architectural masterpiece graced with a Persian carpet said to be the biggest in the world.

"It is the third-biggest mosque in the world after the Haramain," boasted the project's deputy head, Khawla al-Suleimani, after Islam's two holiest sites in Saudi Arabia—Mecca's Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

But unlike these two mosques, the one named after the United Arab Emirates' late founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahayan, is not off-limits to non-Muslims.

In fact, the opposite is true—with some provisos.

Women must cover themselves from head to toe in abayas, or long black robes, handed to them at the entrance.

"And non-Muslims must not touch the Koran," the Muslim holy book, copies of which are stacked in every prayer room, cautions one of the guides.

Armed with cameras to capture the splendor of the place, visitors have been coming from within the UAE "but also from abroad," said Suleimani.

"Hundreds have been coming every week since the opening [of the mosque] on the first day of Eid al-Adha," the Muslim feast of sacrifice, which fell in December, she added.

The project was launched in 1998 by Sheikh Zayed, who besides being the UAE's first president was also ruler of the oil-rich emirate of Abu Dhabi, one of seven making up the Gulf federation. Work will be fully completed in November 2009.

Sheikh Zayed, who died in November 2004, is buried in a courtyard adjacent to the mosque.

"The mosque is dedicated to the father of the nation, whose vision was founded on dialogue between religions, civilizations and cultures," according to brochures handed out to visitors by the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority.

The authority began to organize guided tours of the place last month.

"Apart from the thousands of [Muslim] faithful who come to pray, the mosque is visited by non-Muslims: Germans, French, Britons, Italians, Russians, Americans, Argentinians and Indians," said a guidebook.

Abu Dhabi seeking to become a cultural hub

Unlike the leisure-oriented UAE emirate of Dubai, Abu Dhabi is seeking to become a cultural hub and sees the mosque as one more attraction for tourists looking for more than sandy beaches and huge shopping malls.

"As Sheikh Zayed wished, the mosque was built on a 9.5-meter high hill so it is visible from far, it covers an area of 22,000 square meters, and it can



■ A partial view shows the new Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi on February 22, 2008. Upon completion, it will be the biggest mosque in the United Arab Emirates and the third-largest in the world, according to the director of the project. The mosque is named after the late leader of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahayan. AFP PHOTO

accommodate more than 40,000 faithful," said engineer Mohammad Ali al-Ameri.

Earlier in March, Ameri had said construction was nearly complete, with only fences, gardens and car parks still to be completed.

"Built 100 percent with Italian marble, the mosque has four 107-meter tall minarets, 82 domes of seven different sizes, 96 columns inside and 1,048 outside," said Ameri.

"Thousands of workers," nearly all from the Asian subcontinent, were involved in building the mosque, he said. The sculptors were Moroccan.

Thousands of rare and semi-precious stones, some encrusted in marble, were used to decorate the structure.

The centerpiece is a 6,000-square-meter handmade Persian carpet, said to be the biggest in the world.

"More than 1,200 women from the Khorasan region in eastern Iran spent two years weaving

the carpet, which weighs 45 tons and cost more than \$8.5 million," Ameri said.

The carpet covers the floor of the main prayer hall, which can accommodate up to 9,000 faithful.

Two rooms next to the main prayer hall, with a 1,500-capacity each, have been reserved for women, who can follow sermons delivered by prayer leaders on giant television screens. Islam requires men and women to pray separately.

The main dome is also "the biggest" mosque dome in the world, according to Ameri, who said it is 75 meters high with a 32.2-meter diameter.

Another breathtaking piece is a huge crystal chandelier in the main prayer hall, one of seven German-made chandeliers costing more than \$8 million. It is 10 meters tall, 10 meters wide and weighs nine tons.

Ameri would not give the total cost of the mosque, but Suleimani estimated it at more than 2 billion dirhams (\$545 million). **AFP**

Islamic banking needs regulator support—Moody's

SINGAPORE: East Asia's Islamic banking industry needs more support from regulators if it is to grow significantly, Moody's Investors Service said recently.

Besides Malaysia, the growth of Islamic banking has been "somewhat patchy" in the region, the ratings agency said in a report.

Malaysia, a multiracial country with a majority Muslim population, shows how the Islamic banking sector can benefit from regulatory action, said Christine Kuo, author of the report.

"We believe the Malaysian

experience over the last three decades demonstrates how instrumental regulators can and need to be in order to grow the Islamic banking sector," Kuo said.

Malaysian government reforms over the past 20 to 30 years "have really helped develop the necessary legal and regulatory framework and institutions for the industry to flourish," she said.

"The adoption of various incentives, including tax breaks, has also proven critical to nourishing the business."

Kuo said last week that Islamic

banking in Malaysia accounts for 15.4 percent, or \$62 billion, of the country's banking system assets.

In Indonesia, the world's most-populous Muslim nation, Islamic banking has grown rapidly in recent years, but its market share still only accounts for less than 2 percent, or about \$3 billion, Moody's said.

"The low penetration in Moody's opinion, can largely be attributed to the slow pace of change to related regulations and institutions—though a few

important changes seem to be gathering momentum," the report said.

It said Islamic banking has achieved relatively high market penetration in Brunei but Islamic banking services in the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand remain very small in terms of asset size.

Islamic banking fuses principles of sharia or Islamic law and modern banking. Islamic funds are banned from investing in companies associated with tobacco, alcohol or gambling considered taboo by Muslims. **AFP**

Abu Dhabi introduces new food legislation

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi, the largest emirate of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has introduced a new food law to ensure the safety of food items, local newspaper *Khaleej Times* reported recently.

The new law, which will come into effect on May 1, aims to organize the relationships between the government, the private sector and the consumers in a way guaranteeing the safety of the people, according to the report.

The law will be enforced on all establishments that trade in food and those involved in activities related to food items in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, Rashid Al Shuraiqi, Director of Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, was quoted as saying.

The law stipulates imprisonment

for at least three months and/or a fine ranging from 30,000 dirhams to 200,000 dirhams for anyone bringing or trading in food that is harmful to health. A dollar is 3.67 dirhams.

Under the new law, those who trade in counterfeit products by adding unauthentic ingredients to food items to increase production will face at least two months' imprisonment and/or a fine ranging from 20,000 dirhams to 150,000 dirhams.

The law also stipulates punishments for those who promote, distribute or contribute to information misleading the public regarding counterfeit or contaminated products and those who trade in pork products or any alcoholic beverages without prior permission. **XINHUA**

Pakistani premier opposes linking Islam with terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gillani on Wednesday stressed the need to dispel the misperception about linking Islam with terrorism.

"Islam is a religion of peace and propagates tolerance, interfaith harmony and compassion," said Gillani while meeting with visiting Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta.

In an official statement, Gillani termed terrorism as a serious threat to peace and prosperity of the world, saying that a multi-pronged strategy is required to curb this menace.

The meeting of a mini Pakistan-Afghan peace Jirga, or council of tribal elders, would soon be held so as to achieve objectives of lasting peace in

the region.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan desires to further enhance cooperation and coordination with Afghanistan in the diplomatic, economic and security fields.

Spanta said regular contact between the two governments will help in strengthening relationship and improving understanding and further cementing relations between the two brotherly countries.

Spanta also invited Gillani to visit Afghanistan at his convenience.

Also on Wednesday, Spanta held talks with his Pakistani counterpart, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, and called on President Pervez Musharraf and National Assembly Speaker Fahmida Mirza. **XINHUA**



Republic of the Philippines
Department of Public Works and Highways
ZAMBALES FIRST DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE
Office of the District Engineer
Iba, Zambales

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The *Zambales 1st Engineering District*, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors to apply for eligibility and, if found eligible, to bid for the following contract:

- Contract ID: **08CL0034**
Contract Name: **Demolition/Clearing of Old Maculcol Bridge**
Contract Location: **San Felipe, Zambales**
Brief Description: **Demolition**
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): **Php2,541,231.00**
Contract Duration: **60 calendar days**
LOI: **Php500.00**
Bidding Documents: **Php1,250.00**
- Contract ID: **08CL0035**
Contract Name: **Dismantling of Sto Nino Br., (ACRO)**
Contract Location: **Cabangan Zambales**
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): **Php745,173.00**
Contract Duration: **60 calendar days**
LOI: **Php500.00**
Bidding Documents: **Php500.00**
- Contract ID: **08CL0036**
Contract Name: **Inhobol (Encarnacion St.) FMR**
Contract Location: **Masinloc, Zambales**
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): **Php955,350.00**
Contract Duration: **60 calendar days**
LOI: **Php500.00**
Bidding Documents: **Php500.00**
- Contract ID: **08CL0037**
Contract Name: **Repair and Rehab, Sindol Section,**
Contract Location: **Sindol, San Felipe, Zambales (with Exception)**
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): **Php9,850,000.00**
Contract Duration: **25 calendar days**
LOI: **Php900.00**
Bidding Documents: **Php4,500.00**

The BAC will conduct this public bidding in accordance with R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A.

To be eligible to bid for this contract, a contractor must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and must meet the following major criteria: (a) prior registration with the DPWH, (b) Filipino citizen or 75% Filipino-owned partnership/corporation with PCAB license applicable to the type and cost of this contract, (c) completion of a similar contract costing at least 50% of ABC, and (d) Net Financial Contracting Capacity at least equal to ABC, or credit line commitment/cash deposit certificate for at least 10% of ABC. The DPWH will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the eligibility check, preliminary examination of bids, evaluation of bids, post qualification, and award.

Unregistered contractors, however, may submit their LOIs simultaneously with their applications for registration, to the *Zambales 1st Engineering District* before the deadline set below for the receipt of LOIs. The DPWH Central BAC-TWG will first process the contractor's applications for registration and issue the Contractor's Certificate of Registration (CRC) before processing their LOIs. The DPWH Central BAC-TWG will process only those with complete registration requirements.

The significant times and deadlines of procurement activities are shown below:

1. Receipt of LOIs from Prospective Bidders	Deadline: 10:00 A.M. of April 29, 2008
2. Issuance of Results of Eligibility Check	From: May 5, 2008
3. Issuance of Bidding Documents	From: May 6, 2008
4. Pre-Bid Conference	
5. Receipt of Bids	Deadline: 10:00 A.M. of May 20, 2008
6. Opening of Bids	2:00 P.M. of May 20, 2008

Prospective bidders may download the Registration and LOI Forms from the DPWH website www.dpwh.gov.ph. The BAC will issue hard copies of LOI Forms at *DPWH Compound, Iba, Zambales* upon payment of a non-refundable fee. Prospective bidders that will download the LOI forms shall pay the same amount upon submission of their LOIs. Prospective bidders shall submit their accomplished LOIs and obtain the results of the eligibility check at the same address.

Prospective bidders may also download the Bidding Documents (BDs), if available, from the DPWH web site. The BAC will also issue hard copies of the BDs at the same address to eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee. Eligible bidders that will download the BDs from the DPWH website shall pay the said fees upon the submission of their bids.

The *Zambales 1st Engineering District* reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process anytime before Contract award, without incurring any liability to the affected bidders.

Approved by:

(SGD) HERCULES C. MANGLICMOT
BAC Chairman

MT – Apr. 23 & 25, 2008



Republika ng Pilipinas
KAGAWARAN NG PAGAWAIN AT LANSANGANG PAMBAYAN
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ENGINEER
Southern Leyte Engineering District
Maasin City, Southern Leyte

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Southern Leyte Engineering District, Maasin City, Southern Leyte through the Bids & Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors to apply for eligibility and, if found eligible, to bid for the following contract:

- Contract ID: 08 – IL – 0061
Contract Project: Repair/Improvement of National Roads and Bridges along Pacific Area, Km. 1050+000 – Km. 1080+000 and Panaoan Area Km. 1058+000 – Km. 1090+000 with exception
Contract Location: Southern Leyte
Brief Description: Supply/Installation of Guardrails, Reflectorized Traffic Signages
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC): P19,200,000.00
Contract Duration: 150 calendar days

The BAC will conduct this public bidding in accordance with R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A.

To be eligible to bid for this contract, a contractor must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) and must meet the following major criteria: (a) prior registration with the DPWH, (b) Filipino citizen or 75% Filipino-owned partnership/corporation with PCAB license applicable to the type and cost of this contract, (c) completion of a similar contract costing at least 10% of ABC, and (d) Net Financial Contracting Capacity at least equal to ABC, or credit line commitment/cash deposit certificate for at least 10% of ABC. The DPWH will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the eligibility check, preliminary examination of bids, evaluation of bids, post qualification, and award.

Unregistered contractors, however, may submit their LOIs simultaneously with their applications for registration, to the Southern Leyte Engineering District before the deadline set below for the receipt of LOIs.

The DPWH Central BAC-TWG will first process the contractor's applications for registration and issue the Contractor's Certificate of Registration (CRC) before processing their LOIs. The DPWH Central BAC-TWG will process only those with complete registration requirements.

The significant times and deadlines of procurement activities are shown below:

1. Receipt of LOIs from Respective Bidders	Deadline: 10:00 a.m., April 28, 2008
2. Issuance of Results of Eligibility Check	May 5, 2008
3. Issuance of Bidding Documents	May 12, 2008
4. Pre-Bid Conference	10:00 a.m., May 13, 2008
5. Receipt of Bids	10:00 a.m., May 27, 2008
6. Opening of Bids	2:00 p.m., May 27, 2008

Prospective bidders may get hard copies of LOI Form and shall submit same duly accomplished, **In Person or through their authorized representative** as reflected in their CONTRACTORS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE (CRC), to the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), DPWH, Southern Leyte Engineering District, Maasin City, Southern Leyte, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of:

- P500 for projects below 1 million
- P1,000.00 for projects above 1 million to 5 million
- P1,500.00 for projects above 5 million

And upon presentation of the following:

- Original CRC with Xerox Copies (1 set)
- Two (2) valid IDs of Proprietor/Manager or Authorized Representative submitting the above

Prospective bidders may also download the Bidding Documents (BDs), if available, from the DPWH web site. The BAC will also issue hard copies of the BDs at the same address to eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of:

- P1,000.00 for project below 1 million
- P1,500.00 for project above 1 million to 5 million
- P2,500.00 for project above 5 million

Eligible bidders that will download the BDs from the DPWH website shall pay the said fees upon the submission of their bids.

The Southern Leyte Engineering District reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process anytime before Contract award, without incurring any liability to the affected bidders.

Approved by:

(SGD.) LINO FRANCISCO C. GONZALEZ
OIC – Asst. District Engineer
BAC-Chairman
DPWH,SLEED
Asuncion, Maasin City, Southern Leyte
Tel. No. (053) 381-3581
Fax No. 053-381-3581

NOTED:

(SGD.) CARLOS G. VELOSO
District Engineer

MT – April 25, 2008